

## The Sun

AND NEW YORK PRESS.

MONDAY, MARCH 10, 1919.

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Entered at the Post Office at New York as Second Class Matter March 10, 1919.

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BOOKS AND THE BOOK WORLD.  
Weekly, one year, \$10.00  
Canada, \$12.00  
All checks, money orders, etc., to be made payable to THE SUN.

Published daily, including Sunday, by The Sun Printing and Publishing Association, 100 Nassau St., New York, N. Y.

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Vice-President, John W. Ward, 100 Nassau St., New York, N. Y.  
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Paris office, 6 Rue de la Michodière.  
Rue du Quatre Septembre.  
Washington office, 1000 Pennsylvania Ave., N. E.  
Brooklyn office, Room 202, Eagle Building, 303 Washington Street.

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A Proposal to Assess Old World Debts on America.

That a responsible high and powerful member of the French Government—no less a personage than the chairman of the Budget Committee of the Chamber of Deputies—should iterate and reiterate in all seriousness his proposal to assess immeasurable Old World debts on the United States must burn a deep lesson in American minds.

M. PERRET's scheme of a financial league of nations, with a pooling both of their obligations and of their assets, could mean, of course, nothing but to give the United States the job of war bill paying for those unable themselves to settle up. The Budget Committee chairman, indeed, acknowledges the inability of some of the nations to pay. He demands for that very reason a money supply through an international loan bearing the signatures of all the Allies. From that fund repayment payments would be made immediately to France, Belgium, Serbia, etc.

Nobody is ignorant of the business fact, legally and morally binding, that if there are a dozen names on a note but only one of them good in the commercial and financial sense, it is the one good name which must pay the whole when the others default. Nobody can doubt, then, that M. PERRET's project reduces itself to a proposal to break the American back with the insupportable debt burden of the Old World.

Yet at such programmes, starting as they are held, let the American people be neither dismayed nor disgusted. Such soundings are merely the inevitable reaction of war worn and war wracked nerve centres from the mauling stuff of official and unofficial crackbrains has smeared over all Europe.

One need not even blame those who have been misled by our own false teachers. From their point of view, in truth, they may be even defended for what they want and their plea of why they should get it at the sacrifice of whomsoever. But as against their own cardinal interest, governing our point of view as to why they shall not get it at our whole sacrifice. The two interests are irreconcilable under the very first law of nature—self-preservation.

Of all the neurotic vapors about America becoming and remaining the whole world's Moses to lead it into a paradise on earth and support it in boundless happiness there will be nothing at all left in the calm, clear retrospect of practical accomplishment. As for the particular vision of M. PERRET, before we see the American people permitting a League of Nations to assess the Old World's innumerable financial deficits on the already heavily loaded but still solid United States we shall hear the crack of doom.

Professor Cassin Speaks in Lovely Language.

The United States Tariff Commission in a report to the President on reciprocity and commercial treaties says that this country now "must consider the world at large, and must shape its commercial policies in conformity with the political and humanitarian principles which govern its general attitude in the international sphere."

Ignoring the interesting inference clearly implied by the language used by the commission, that members of that distinguished body know what no one else seems to know, what our general attitude in the international sphere is, or is to be, there is another thing about which much is known and which cannot be ignored by gentlemen engaged in formulating principles to govern our international trade relations.

The Tariff Commission makes neither tariffs nor treaties. Our commercial policies in the international sphere will of course be largely determined by the tariff bill to be constructed by the House Ways and Means Committee in the Sixty-sixth Congress. A man with a significantly square jaw and an immovable belief in "America for Americans" as a

sound political creed, Josiah W. Foxworth of Michigan, will be chairman of that committee. That means that the tariff bill which the committee will construct will be designed to protect the interests of American industry, American commerce and American labor with such clearness and emphasis as surely to disappoint and possibly alarm Professor TASSIAO, chairman, and his fellow members of the Tariff Commission and all others who hope for a tariff constructed in accordance with "humanitarian principles" which seek to benefit the industries, commerce and labor of America's trade rivals throughout the world, the "international sphere," which includes Japan and China as well as Germany and Austria.

Our compliance with what we deem to be a duty in stating these facts must not lead any reader to doubt our sincere congratulations to Professor TASSIAO for his splendid addition to the instrumentalities of language, the resonant phrase describing our attitude in the international sphere. We confess to a wish that we were at liberty to call it a pipkin.

Madhouse Flour Price Scheme of the Government Food Trust.

Like DAVE CROCKETT's coon in the tall tree, the Government Food Trust would like to come down before the public begins to shoot. But apparently it doesn't know how.

The Grain Administration announces a weird scheme to give the American people a 5 cent loaf. This is to be done notwithstanding the purchase from the farmers by the Government of all their wheat on a \$2.26 basis and the resale of the wheat by the Government to the flour mills at a correspondingly higher price. Then the Government proposes to buy the flour from the millers on the inflated basis. Then again the flour would be sold to the bakers at a loss of \$2 a barrel, the Government footing the loss. The purpose of all this monkey business, of course, is to sustain the price of all American wheat for all uses on the \$2.26 basis in the fatuous belief that if the Government Food Trust is thus dealing in wheat on that basis in our own country it can deal in our enormous surplus on the same basis in foreign countries.

But the stupidity of such a performance, if the Government Food Trust really tried it, would be incomparable. In the first place, knocking merely \$2 a barrel off the price of flour is no assurance of the 5 cent loaf to American consumers. For one thing, we did not drive up the price of flour merely \$2 a barrel. It sent it up from around \$6 a barrel to \$10 a barrel, \$11 a barrel, \$12 a barrel.

There is no possibility that the Grain Administration thinks the price of flour is now \$8 a barrel or \$9 a barrel or \$10 a barrel. How, then, could a mere \$2 a barrel off a still grossly inflated price send the price of flour down to the low level which is necessary for a 5 cent loaf?

For another thing, the price of the loaf no longer depends merely upon the price of wheat and flour. While the baker's flour was doubling in price his labor was climbing in about the same way. The Government Food Trust's ridiculous proposal, therefore, is not going to give, cannot give, a 5 cent loaf to the American people, although there will be more wheat in this country than can be got rid of unless it is burned in the fields or sunk to the bottom of the sea.

For yet another thing, with more wheat in this country than anybody wants, the Government could not export our tremendous 1919 surplus on a \$2.26 basis, even though it could compel our millers to pay \$5 a bushel for wheat, our bakers \$50 a barrel for flour and our bread eaters 25 cents for a loaf. On the farmer's basis of \$2.26, with about 16 cents for transportation to the seaboard and about 55 cents for overseas freight and handling, American wheat in England would always have to sell at \$3 a bushel. But at this very moment, while foreign export stocks are only beginning to move, Australian wheat is being laid down in England at \$1.95 a bushel and is going to slide on down.

On the same day the Government Food Trust's preposterous announcement is given to the country Sir JAMES WILSON, world authority on grain, former delegate for the British Empire at the International Institute of Agriculture, reports that the world's wheat surplus in a few weeks will be prodigious. He estimates that by the end of this summer the price of wheat in England—In England, with all the rail and ship transportation charges, profits, commissions, insurance rates, etc.—may be down as low as \$1.25 a bushel. Why, if American wheat were on a farm basis well under \$1 a bushel instead of \$2.26, it could not compete with an Australian, Canadian or Argentinian price of \$1.25 in England.

The Government Food Trust is simply rigging up a contrivance which will prevent us from getting rid of any of our surplus wheat of the 1919 crop. It will make a world market for Canadian wheat, for Argentine wheat, for Australian wheat, for Indian wheat, selling for what it is worth, while our wheat, held far above what it is worth, sits on the hands of the Government Food Trust by the hundreds of millions of bushels.

Worse yet, Sir JAMES WILSON shows that because of the enormous overproduction of wheat, compelling an unprecedented carry over from 1919 to 1920, there is going to be too much world wheat for the good of the farmer for several years. So the Government Food Trust, holding up wheat at a price where it cannot be sold abroad, there being at the same

time no possibility of American bread eaters disposing of it at any price, is simply driving nails in the wheat farmer's coffin for next year when there will be no guaranteed price.

And worst of all for the people of the United States, when the Government Food Trust holds up the price of wheat in this country on the \$2.26 basis, selling it or not selling it, burning it to get rid of it or not burning it, the Government Food Trust keeps all the other costs of living jacked up to the top notch.

It is the price of wheat which is the basis of the price of beef, of mutton, of pork, of poultry, of eggs, of milk, of butter, of cheese. When wheat is sky high, whether it is selling or rotting, corn and other grains which go to feed and fatten live stock and poultry will likewise soar sky high. That must keep all meat products and dairy products sky high—all food products sky high. That must empty the American consumer's pocket.

Rather than try to carry out this scheme of the Infatuated Grain Administration it would be better for the farmers if the Government, whatever its losses on its \$2.26 contract with them, let the wheat go on the general market, for domestic and export consumption both, under the free workings of the law of supply and demand, though it should sell down to \$1.50 a bushel, \$1.25 a bushel, \$1 a bushel—to any level. Rather than carry over hundreds of millions of bushels of rotting surplus wheat it would be better for the country to feed it to the pigs—to give it away to anybody that would take it for nothing. Though this should cost the Treasury half a billion of dollars or three-quarters of a billion of dollars or a billion of dollars, it would be economically cheaper many times over for the American people than the madhouse performance proposed by the Government Food Trust.

Al Smith and the Senate.

The reported ambition of AL SMITH to run for the United States Senate next year will be a shock to his home town admirers who had pictured his biennial election to the Governorship for an indefinite period, always accompanied by a Caesar gown gray in guarding the idol of Oliver Street.

It is hard to believe that the Governor has wearied so soon of the arduous detail work at the State Capitol. AL SMITH is not a lazy man. We prefer to believe that the new ambition, if it really burns, is prompted by a desire to make sure that there will be a full supply of Smiths in the United States Senate.

In the Congress which recently expired there were five Senators named SMITH. WILLIAM ALDEN SMITH of Michigan is now out, leaving four—MARCUS A. of Arizona, HOKA of Georgia, JOHN W. of Maryland and ELLISON D. of South Carolina. All but the last named are 64 or older. All four are Democrats. Curiously, the terms of all four expire on March 3, 1921. It may be that Governor SMITH sees the terrible possibility of the Sixty-seventh Congress being without a Senator SMITH.

AL SMITH might like Washington, and we can easily imagine Washington liking AL SMITH. To Caesar, however, the place would not be as pleasant as Albany. The heat in the summer months of the long session would be trying to the Great Dane.

Promotion of Amateur Boxing.

General LEONARD WOOL declined the presidency of the National Commission of Boxing Control. He could not give the time which the president of that commission must give properly to organize and operate it if it is to be what is hoped for by all lovers of the fine sport of boxing; an effective influence to promote the sport on clean, high class lines, strictly amateur.

But General Wool gave generous support to the commission. "But the sport," he wrote, "upon the same basis as the National Tennis Association, Golf Association, absolutely in no way connected with or sympathizing with professional ring work. I absolutely approve the idea from the standpoint of clean amateur sport, looking to the physical benefit of our youth."

This competent witness might have added his approval from the standpoint of good fun, exercise, entertainment. It is an evident fact that the many scandalous performances in connection with professional boxing have injured its standing with amateurs. Twenty-five years ago there were few neighborhood groups of boys, at least in smaller cities, towns and villages, who did not own a set of boxing gloves and use them with benefit to tempers and muscles in back yards and barns. To-day there seem to be comparatively few youths who are adept in the exhilarating sport of "putting up their dukes."

"Veronica's Veil."

Since the passion play "Veronica's Veil" was presented for the first time in 1914 by the parishioners of St. Joseph's Church in West Hoboken it has achieved a national fame which gives promise of permanence and may in time establish it among the notable religious dramatic productions of the world. Already it attracts patrons from all parts of the United States and Canada, and the necessities of its presentation have resulted in the construction of a large modern auditorium.

The success of this unusual exhibition is largely attributable to the skill and discernment displayed by Father CONNOR in the selection of players for the exacting parts. These players are all amateurs and members of St. Joseph's. Their training has been thorough and complete, and the spirit of devotion they bring to their performance

has a potent influence in equipping them for their task. The same persons, so far as may be, appear in each annual repetition of the play. This year certain changes have been made because of the absence of some of the actors in the national service, but the cast of 200 men and women may fairly be said to be the same as it has been in the past.

The St. Joseph's production differs from the pageants and historical plays that have attained popularity in all parts of America within the last few years because it is planned to maintain it as an annual institution indefinitely, and to gain for it a reputation which will put it on the same plane as the Oberammergau passion play.

That production, however, has been repeated only every tenth year, in accordance with the vow made in gratitude for the cessation of the Black Death in 1353. The Oberammergau play has enlisted the services of 600 persons as actors and actresses; St. Joseph's is not so ambitious in numbers, but the spirit of reverence in which the participants approach their personations is deep and true. The experiment has already achieved more than momentary success, and its development will be interesting to those who regard it as a spectacle, as well as to those who look upon it as a significant incident in the evolution of religious activity in America.

You Must Not Yell "Fire!" in a Theatre.

Nothing could be more sane, reasonable and enlightening than the words uttered by Associate Justice HOLMES of the Supreme Court of the United States in delivering the opinion of that tribunal in a case arising under the espionage act in which the defendant pleaded his constitutional right of free speech. Justice HOLMES said:

"When a nation is at war many things that might be said in time of peace are such a hindrance to its effort that their utterance will not be endured so long as men fight, and no court would regard them as protected by any constitutional right."

"We admit that in many places and in ordinary times the defendants in saying all that was said in the circular would have been within the constitutional rights. But the character of every act depends upon the circumstances in which it is done."

"The most stringent protection of free speech would not protect a man in falsely shouting fire in a theatre and causing a panic."

There has been much loose thinking and loose talking about the right of free speech. A good many persons have contended, more vociferously than logically, that it must protect them in any utterance they choose to make, at any place, at any time and under any circumstances. Their interpretation of the right would protect an excitable man in bawling his social, political or religious opinions at the top of his lungs in a residential district in the small hours of the night, to the disturbance and injury of those who were seeking sleep. The constitutional provision has no such ridiculous end in view, nor was it written to help enemies of the nation in days of danger.

The right of free speech is to be exercised like every other right, with reason, according to circumstances; and it does not operate to shelter traitors in war time, any more than it shields slanderers in peace time.

Peace first, and then the protest plans for a veiled future.

The number of Rhodes scholars at Oxford before the war was nearly 200. The report of the secretary for the Rhodes Trust, just received in New York, states that only nine scholars were in residence in 1918, and four of those had been expelled. Of the smaller colleges there were transferred twenty-eight 5 inch and ninety-two 6 inch, of which latter eighteen will be returned to the carriage and positions they occupied at the beginning of the war; the remainder were mounted on disappearing carriages, which type is not regarded as a satisfactory mount for the 6 inch gun.

Not all of the guns, however, reached Europe, but they were all dismantled, and it is planned to mount some of them on railroad motors. The guns were removed from fortifications that were not considered of first importance.

WHAT IS A JEW'S HARP?

Three Classifications Given in Customs Duty Protest.

From the Christian Science Monitor.

Is the Jew's-harp a toy or a musical instrument? A judicial decision says it is a musical instrument and yet leaves it legally a toy. Customs regulations classify it as a toy, but not long ago an importer protested that it ought to be classified as "miscellaneous metal," which pays less duty.

The question was taken to the courts. The judge decided that the Jew's-harp is a musical instrument, but in view of the miscellaneous nature of the metal, it is to be regarded as a toy for customs purposes.

Perhaps, after all, the answer to the question depends on the performer; as the Jew's-harp is a musical instrument, it is to be regarded as a toy, and once in a while in the mouth and hands of an expert Jew's-harpist it is a musical instrument.

Doctors for Rural Communities.

From Health News.

Many rural communities in New York State have been without physicians because of death and military appointments or other causes. As a result of letters received from a number of such communities the State Department of Health has undertaken to put the authorities in such places in touch with physicians desiring rural locations.

This was accomplished by advertisements in dental journals and by newspaper publicity. To date replies have been received from ninety-six physicians located in twenty different States and names have been sent to twenty-four communities.

New Tax Wavies in Arkansas.

From the Little Rock Post.

We were glad to have Sheriff Bob Pierce with us Wednesday, as he was only collecting taxes.

Reform in Nebraska.

From the Nebraska Enterprise.

While those flows freely in Staphen the gambling places have been reduced to three, we are told by good authority.

The Bride.

The silver bug above the sea. Has thinned to wedding lace Through which the sun comes peeping like A round and ruddy face. As ringed wreath of pearls from Under the shining tides.

The ship of hearts comes steaming in With all the happy brides. The Irish Rover, raven tressed. With eyes of roguish blue. The English Mary, rose checked. And French Madelon, who crowd Along the rail to see This new and wondrous land of love And hope and liberty.

The whistles tell a wedding march All up and down the bay. And staid dowdy persons wave The girl's greeting: "Well! They loved our heroes well enough To leave all else besides And make America their own. So welcome home the brides. MINNA LITINA.

Even a soldier who has listened to drums at close range shudders at the thought of German opera.

## GERMAN OPERETTA.

Mrs. Jay Protests Against To-night's Proposed Production.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN:—Next Monday night New York celebrates the arrival of our blessed troops with the opening of a season of German operetta. In the heart of our city there will be sung that language which voiced the doom of peace and commanded millions of souls to misery.

As Marshall Foch says, "We are still at war," and Kultur now obscures one of our largest auditoriums. There is no legal remedy to offset the absurdity of extending the art of a country dishonored and craven, at a moment when we build grand stands and prepare bunting welcomes to the men who fought Germany.

Against this argument is pitted the statement by the operetta manager that the German population has need of such relaxation and that the past century has honored and craven, at a moment when we build grand stands and prepare bunting welcomes to the men who fought Germany.

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